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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
Twenty-sixth Session

# CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

## Concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

## Palau

1. The Committee considered the initial report of Palau (CRC/C/51/Add.3), received on 21 October 1998, at its 691st to 692nd meetings (see CRC/C/SR.691-692), held on 23 January 2001, and adopted* the following concluding observations.

### A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's initial report, which followed the established guidelines. The Committee welcomes the written replies to its list of issues (CRC/C/Q/PAL/1) which allowed for a clearer understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party. The Committee is encouraged by the dialogue it had with the State party and acknowledges that the presence of a delegation involved in the implementation of the Convention allowed for a fuller assessment of the situation of children in Palau.

* At the 697th meeting, held on 26 January 2001.

## B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee expresses satisfaction with the quality of the State party report, which provided information on the practical implementation of the Convention, as well as the challenges and limitations faced in this regard. The Committees notes with appreciation that the preparation of the State report was a collaborative process that involved political and community leaders, including the Council of Chiefs, as well as civil society and the general public.

4. The Committee notes the establishment in 1995 of the National Committee on Population and Children (CoPopChi), the inter-agency committee mandated inter alia to monitor implementation of the Convention. The Committee also welcomes the inclusion of NGOs in the membership of CoPopChi and its work in cooperation with the Council of Chiefs.

5. The Committee notes with appreciation the efforts of the State party to disseminate the principles and provisions of the Convention. In particular, the Committee notes that the State party has translated the Convention into Palauan and distributed it at public meetings, in schools and among parents.

6. The Committee welcomes the National Plan of Action for Children presented to it by the State party, which identifies priority areas for action and makes recommendations with regard to agencies and organizations best suited to implement the Plan.

7. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Victims of Crime Assistance (VOCA) programme that operates within the Ministry of Health to provide assistance to victims of child abuse and domestic violence.

8. The Committee welcomes the recent (1997-1998) legal amendment that provides for compulsory education for all children between the ages of 5 and 17 years.

## C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

9. The Committee notes the challenges faced by the State party in implementing adequate programmes and services for children living in the outer islands, which are in some instances isolated and very difficult to reach. The Committee also notes that the limited availability of skilled human resources, compounded by the relatively high rate of emigration, also adversely affects the full implementation of the Convention. Additionally, it is noted that a significant portion of the State party's financing is derived from transfer payments from the United States under the Compact of Free Association, the phasing out of which in 2009 may have an impact on the allocation of budgetary resources for children. The implementation of the Convention is further hindered by the fact that the National Master Development Plan, established in 1998 as a strategic framework for achieving economic independence, does not include children's programmes.

## D. Subjects of concern and the Committee's Recommendations

### 1. General measures of implementation

**Status of the Convention in domestic law**

10. The Committee notes that the Convention on the Rights of the Child may not be invoked before the courts unless the relevant articles have been enacted into the Palau Code and expresses concern that insufficient efforts have been made to facilitate this process.

**11. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to enact domestic legislation to give direct effect to the Convention.**

**Legislation**

12. While the Committee notes that the State party has undertaken a study to determine the inconsistencies between its laws (both statutory and customary laws) and the Convention, it is concerned that insufficient efforts have been made to address the inconsistencies found. Concern is expressed that domestic legislation still does not fully conform to the principles and provisions of the Convention.

**13. The Committee recommends that the State party take all effective measures to ensure that its laws conform fully to the principles and provisions of the Convention. The Committee also encourages the State party to consider the possibility of enacting a comprehensive code for children. The Committee recommends that the State party seek technical assistance from, inter alia, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNICEF.**

**Ratification of international human rights instruments**

14. The Committee expresses regret that the State party has not yet acceded to the six main international human rights instruments, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The Committee notes that these international human rights instruments would reinforce a culture of human rights and strengthen the efforts of the State party to meet its obligations in guaranteeing the rights of all children under its jurisdiction.

**15. The Committee encourages the State party to consider the possibility of acceding to the international human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party.**

**Coordination**

16. While the Committee notes that the National Committee on Population and Children (CoPopChi) has been established to coordinate the implementation of the Convention, it is concerned that insufficient human and financial resources have been allocated for the Committee.

**17. The Committee recommends that the State party allocate adequate human and financial resources to CoPopChi.**

18. The Committee notes that the State party has elaborated a National Plan of Action for Children that establishes priorities that are largely consistent with the provisions and principles of the Convention. However, the Committee is concerned that the Office of Child and Family Support, identified in the National Plan of Action for Children as the focal point for children and family support activities, as well as for the implementation of the Convention, has not yet been established.

**19. The Committee encourages the State party to take all appropriate measures to implement the proposed National Plan of Action for Children. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to establish the Office of Child and Family Support and to ensure that adequate financial, human and technical resources are allocated to that office to enable it to function effectively.**

**Data collection**

20. The Committee notes that the report and the core document of the State party both contain substantive statistical data. The Committee is concerned that the State party's data collection mechanism does not adequately allow for the systematic and comprehensive collection of disaggregated data on and the effective monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved in implementing policies and programmes for children below the age of 18 years.

**21. The Committee recommends that the State party reinforce its efforts to develop a comprehensive system of data collection incorporating all the areas covered by the Convention. Such a system should cover all children below the age of 18 years, with specific emphasis on those who are particularly vulnerable, including children of non-Palauan parentage, especially children of immigrant families; children living in the outer islands; children in conflict with the law; children of single-parent families; and sexually abused children, including boys. In this context, the Committee recommends that the State party seek technical assistance from, inter alia, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF.**

**Independent monitoring structure**

22. The Committee notes that the State party, under the National Plan of Action for Children, intends to establish an ombudsperson for children within the proposed Office for Child and Family Support. The Committee further notes that that office will also be responsible for

coordinating the implementation of the Convention. The Committee expresses concern at the potential conflict of interest that may arise as a result of having the same office responsible for both coordination and monitoring.

**23. The Committee encourages the State party to reinforce its efforts to establish an independent monitoring mechanism, such as an ombudsperson for children, to deal with complaints of violations of the rights of children and to provide remedies for such violations. The Committee further encourages the State party to take all appropriate measures to ensure that the office of the ombudsperson is allocated adequate resources and is child-friendly and accessible to children. The Committee suggests that the State party introduce an awareness raising campaign to facilitate the effective use by children of the monitoring mechanism. The Committee further suggests that the State party reconsider its proposal to incorporate the ombudsperson for children within the Office for Child and Family Support so as to ensure that the agency with responsibility for coordinating implementation of the Convention is not also responsible for monitoring implementation.**

**Allocation of budgetary and human resources**

24. The Committee notes with concern that budgetary allocations for education and social services have been gradually reduced since independence (1994) and that there is a scarcity of resources for welfare and social services. The Committee is further concerned that there is no social welfare system in the State party. Additionally, the Committee is concerned that in the light of article 4 of the Convention, not enough attention has been paid to allocating budgetary resources, at both the national and community levels, in favour of children "to the maximum extent of ... available resources". The Committee expresses concern that insufficient efforts have been made to ensure that an adequate proportion of financing gained through international cooperation is allocated to children's programmes.

**25. In the light of articles 2, 3 and 6 of the Convention, the Committee encourages the State party to pay particular attention to the full implementation of article 4 of the Convention by prioritizing budgetary allocations to ensure implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights of children, to the maximum extent of available resources, and where possible with international cooperation. In allocating resources, the State party should pay particular attention not only to education and health, but also to social services, especially in the outer islands and among non-Palauan children, to redress the gradual reduction in allocation to these areas. The Committee recommends that the State party establish a social welfare system to protect vulnerable children, particularly in the light of the recent trend towards charging fees for social services. The Committee also recommends that the State party allocate adequate resources to strengthen the infrastructure of professionals working with and for children. The Committee encourages the State party to reinforce its efforts in preparation for the eventual phasing out of the Compact of Free Association by, inter alia, allocating adequate financial and human resources. In this connection, the State party should guarantee greater protection for the most vulnerable groups of children against the adverse effects of these economic changes.**

**Dissemination of the Convention**

26. The Committee notes the initiatives of the State party to promote awareness of the principles and provisions of the Convention, including the translation of the Convention into Palauan and the collaborative process involved in the preparation of the report. The Committee is concerned, however, that State officials, parliamentarians, professional groups, children, parents, traditional leaders and helpers and the public at large are still not sufficiently aware of the Convention and the rights-based approach enshrined therein.

**27. The Committee recommends that greater effort be made to ensure that the provisions of the Convention are widely known and understood by adults and children alike, particularly at the community level. In this regard, the Committee recommends the reinforcement of adequate and systematic training and/or sensitization of State officials; parliamentarians; and professional groups working with and for children, such as judges, lawyers, law enforcement personnel, teachers, school administrators and health personnel, including psychologists and social workers, as well as traditional community leaders and helpers. Further, the Committee recommends that the State party seek to ensure that the Convention is fully integrated into the curricula at all levels of the educational system. The Committee also encourages the State party to continue to promote the Convention through, inter alia, the use of local languages and traditional methods of communication. The Committee suggests that the State party seek technical assistance from, inter alia, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNICEF.**

**2. Definition of the child**

28. The Committee expresses concern regarding the low legal age for criminal responsibility (10 years). The Committee notes with concern that the State party has not yet established legal minimum ages for sexual consent of boys and employment for children. The Committee notes that the National Youth Policy Task Force has proposed a narrowing of the definition of youth from 15-45 years to 15-34 years. However, it is concerned that the Task Force's new proposal still does not take into account the definition of the child (all persons below the age of 18 years) provided in the Convention.

**29. The Committee recommends that the State party raise the legal age for criminal responsibility. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to introduce legal minimum ages for sexual consent of boys and employment of children to ensure conformity with the principles and provisions of the Convention and to guarantee greater protection for all children below the age of 18 years. In the light of article 1 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party reconsider its proposal regarding the definition of youth.**

**3. General principles**

30. The Committee wishes to express its concern that the State party does not appear to have fully taken into account the provisions of the Convention, especially its general principles, as

reflected in articles 2 (non-discrimination), 3 (best interests of the child), 6 (survival and development) and 12 (respect for the views of the child), in its legislation, its administrative and judicial decisions, as well as in its policies and programmes relevant to children.

**31. It is the Committee's view that further efforts should be undertaken to ensure that the Convention, and in particular the general principles, not only guide policy discussion and decision-making, but are also appropriately integrated in all legal amendments, as well as in judicial and administrative decisions and in projects, programmes and services which have an impact on children.**

**Non-discrimination**

32. The Committee notes with concern that the principle of non-discrimination is not adequately implemented, in particular with respect to vulnerable groups of children, especially children of non-Palauan parentage, including children of immigrant families and children adopted through inter-country adoptions, children living in the outer islands, and children living and/or working on the streets. The Committee is particularly concerned about their limited access to adequate health, education and other social services. The Committee also expresses concern at the disparity in the legal minimum age for marriage of girls (16 years) and boys (18 years).

**33. The Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to ensure the implementation of laws, policies and programmes guaranteeing the principle of non-discrimination and full compliance with article 2 of the Convention, particularly as it relates to the vulnerable groups. In particular, the Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures, including those of a legal nature, to ensure that non-Palauan children are afforded equal and adequate access to health, education and social services. The Committee further recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to increase the legal minimum age of marriage for girls to that of boys (18 years).**

**Best interests of the child**

34. The Committee is concerned that the general principle of the best interests of the child (art. 3) has not been taken fully into account in the State party's legislative, administrative and judicial decisions, as well as in policies and programmes relevant to children. In this regard, the Committee notes that under customary law, family matters usually reflect "the best interests of all concerned parties" as opposed to "the principle of the best interests of the child".

**35. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the general principle of the best interests of the child is appropriately integrated in all legal provisions and under customary law, as well as in judicial and administrative decisions and in projects, programmes and services which have an impact on children.**

**Respect for the views of the child**

36. The Committee notes that the views of children aged 12 years and older are heard in court on matters relating to their own adoption and that children are heard in criminal cases. In other matters the right of the child to express his or her views in court is at the discretion of the judge. While noting that family law matters are generally dealt with under customary law, the Committee is concerned that traditional culture, values and attitudes may not always facilitate expression and consideration of the views of children.

**37. In the light of article 12 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party develop a systematic approach to increase awareness, including among traditional leaders, of the participatory rights of children; and to further encourage respect for the views of the child in the family, communities, schools, and administrative and judicial systems. The Committee welcomes the positive reaction of the delegation to the proposal to consider the establishment of a children's parliament and encourages the State party to review the process undertaken by other States in establishing such a parliament or encouraging some other framework for the participation of children in society.**

## 4. Family environment and alternative care

**Children deprived of a family environment**

38. The Committee notes with concern the breakdown of the traditional extended family structure and the increasing number of female-headed households, particularly in the light of the lack of a welfare support system and alternative care facilities, as well as of inadequate early child-care services. The Committee further expresses concern at the increasing number of children living and/or working on the streets and the lack of policies, programmes and services to provide greater protection and care for these children and to strengthen families.

**39. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake a needs-assessment study of female-headed households with a view to ensuring adequate availability and accessibility of welfare programmes, alternative care facilities and early child-care services. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake a study to understand the scope and nature of the increasing phenomenon of children living and/or working on the streets. Additionally, the Committee recommends that the State party establish mechanisms to ensure that children living and/or working on the streets are provided with nutrition, clothing, housing, health and rehabilitation services, education, and vocational and life-skills training. Moreover, in the light of the weakening of the extended family structure, the Committee recommends that special attention should be paid to the strengthening of families as social units. The Committee recommends that the State party cooperate and coordinate its efforts with civil society in this regard.**

**Adoptions and foster care**

40. The Committee expresses concern at the inadequate legislation, policies and institutions to regulate inter-country adoptions and to protect the rights of children in this regard. It is noted with concern that the law regarding inter-country adoptions does not allow the adopting parents

to transfer their nationality to non-Palauan adopted children. Additionally, concern is expressed that children in inter-country adoptions are generally not eligible for a Palauan passport; and may not own or inherit land or benefit from health, education and social service subsidies. The Committee expresses further concern at the lack of monitoring with respect to both domestic and inter-country adoptions, as well as the widespread practice of unmonitored informal adoptions within the State party. The Committee notes with concern that despite the impact of urbanization and the changing nature of the traditional extended family support system, the State party has not yet instituted a foster care programme and other alternative care facilities.

**41. In the light of article 21 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party establish proper monitoring procedures with respect to both domestic and inter-country adoptions and introduce adequate measures to monitor the practice of traditional informal adoptions with the view to preventing abuse and protecting the best interests of the child. Additionally, it is recommended that the State party take all appropriate measures, including legal and administrative ones, to ensure the effective regulation of inter-country adoptions and to protect the rights of children in this regard. The Committee recommends that the State party consider the implementation of foster care and other alternative care programmes to guarantee greater protection and care for children deprived of a family environment. The Committee encourages the State party to consider the possibility of acceding to the Hague Convention of 1993 on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption.**

**Abuse/neglect/maltreatment/violence**

42. The Committee notes the establishment of the VOCA Programme that provides support services for victims of child abuse and domestic violence, as well as the recent studies undertaken on domestic violence and child abuse. The Committee is concerned about the increasing incidence of sexual abuse of children, including within the family, as well as the continued lack of awareness about domestic violence, ill-treatment, abuse (sexual, physical and psychological) and neglect of children. Concern is also expressed at the insufficient financial and human resources allocated to VOCA, as well as the inadequate programmes established to prevent and combat all forms of abuse against children and to facilitate the rehabilitation of child victims. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of authority under law to remove a child from harmful situations within the home in order to protect him/her.

**43. In the light of article 19, the Committee recommends that the State party reinforce its efforts to prevent and combat domestic violence; child abuse, including sexual abuse; and ill-treatment and neglect of children. It further recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that cases of domestic violence, ill-treatment and sexual abuse of children are properly investigated in the context of a child-friendly judicial procedure and that sanctions are applied to perpetrators, with due regard given to protecting the right to privacy of the child. Additionally, all appropriate measures should be taken to guarantee the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims, in accordance with article 39 of the Convention, including through awareness raising on the role of VOCA. The Committee recommends that the State party review its**

**legislation to guarantee greater protection for children in harmful situations. The Committee recommends that the State party seek technical assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF.**

**Corporal punishment**

44. The Committee notes that the Master Plan for Education (2000) is aimed, inter alia, at strengthening the network of guidance and counselling and at discouraging and preventing the use of physical punishment at both the primary and secondary school levels. The Committee is concerned, however, that corporal punishment is still practised and widely accepted in the State party and that domestic legislation generally does not prohibit and eliminate its use in homes and schools.

45. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures, including of a legislative nature, to prohibit and eliminate all forms of corporal punishment in schools and in homes. The Committee further suggests that awareness raising and education campaigns be conducted to change public attitudes and ensure that alternative forms of discipline are administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the Convention, especially articles 19 and 28.2.**

## 5. Basic health and welfare

**Health and health services**

46. The Committee notes the efforts of the State party to improve early childhood health care and services and to introduce a health insurance programme. While the Committee notes the introduction of a training programme to promote proper breastfeeding techniques, it remains concerned about the continued decline in breastfeeding, especially among working mothers. The Committee notes with concern the increasingly poor nutrition practices and food choices, including within the school lunch programme, as well as the high incidence of overweight and obesity among children, especially those living in urban areas. The Committee notes that abortion is illegal except on medical grounds and expresses concern regarding the best interests of child victims of rape and or incest in this regard. Concern is also expressed about the inadequate environmental health conditions in the State party, particularly as regards solid waste management.

47. **The Committee recommends that the State party reinforce its efforts to promote proper breastfeeding practices, especially among working mothers and in the work environment. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to promote and encourage healthy nutritional practices, in order to prevent and address overweight and obesity among children. The Committee recommends that the State party review its legislation concerning abortion, with a view to guaranteeing the best interests of child victims of rape and incest. Further, it recommends that the State party reinforce its efforts to improve environmental health, particularly as regards solid waste management.**

**Adolescent Health**

48. The Committee expresses its concern with respect to the limited availability of programmes and services and the lack of adequate data in the area of adolescent health, including suicides; mental health, particularly with respect to boys; teenage pregnancy; STDs; and the use and abuse of tobacco, betelnut, alcohol and illicit drugs.

**49. The Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to promote adolescent health policies and services and to further strengthen reproductive health education, including the promotion of male acceptance of the use of contraceptives. The Committee further suggests that a comprehensive and multidisciplinary study be undertaken to understand the scope of adolescent mental health concerns. Additionally, it is recommended that the State party undertake further measures, including the allocation of adequate human and financial resources, to increase the number of social workers and psychologists, and to develop accessible youth-friendly care, counselling, and rehabilitation facilities for adolescents. The Committee encourages the State party to seek technical assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF and the World Health Organization.**

**Children with disabilities**

50. While the Committee notes that the State party has enacted legislation to protect children with disabilities and established an Inter-agency Task Force on Children with Special Needs, it is concerned that there are insufficient programmes, services and resources for children in this regard. The Committee is also concerned about the insufficient efforts and the reluctance of teachers to facilitate the inclusion and acceptance of children with disabilities into the regular school system, despite requirements under law.

**51. In the light of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 48/96) and the Committee's recommendations adopted at its Day of General Discussion on "The rights of children with disabilities" (CRC/C/69), it is recommended that the State party strengthen its efforts to develop early identification programmes to prevent disabilities; establish special education programmes for children with disabilities; and implement the law that provides for their inclusion within the school system. Additionally, the Committee encourages the State party to reinforce its efforts to raise awareness and sensitize the public about the rights and special needs of children with disabilities, including children with mental health concerns. In this regard, the Committee encourages the State party to consider including mental disabilities within the definition of disabilities; to ensure that children with such concerns are provided adequate care, services and rehabilitation; and to guarantee adequate human and financial resource allocations. The Committee further recommends that the State party seek technical cooperation for the training of professional staff working with and for children with disabilities from, inter alia, the World Health Organization.**

## 6. Education, leisure and cultural activities

### Right to and aims of education

52. The Committee notes the Master Plan for Education 2000, which is aimed at, inter alia, improving the quality and relevance of education and preparing students for adult life. However, the Committee is concerned about the inadequate performance of students and the continually high drop-out rates, particularly at the secondary school level. Concern is expressed regarding the insufficient teacher support in smaller schools in the rural areas and the outer islands, as well as the situation of overcrowding in the larger schools in the urban centres. The Committee expresses concern that there is no physical education programme in the school system. The Committee notes with concern that the budgetary allocations for education have been progressively reduced since independence in 1994. The Committee also notes with concern the lack of clear policy and practice on the incorporation of Palauan, as a parallel language, in the educational curriculum.

**53. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures, including the allocation of adequate financial, human and technical resources, to improve the situation (including the quality and relevance) of education and to ensure that all children enjoy the right to education. The Committee further recommends that the State party seek to implement additional measures to encourage children, especially boys, to stay in school, particularly during the period of compulsory education. In this connection, it is recommended that the State party undertake a study on school drop-out and the linkages between the drop-out rate and the relevance of educational material and methods of teaching. In the light of article 31, the Committee recommends that the State party introduce a physical education programme into the school curriculum. The Committee encourages the State party to reinforce its efforts to establish clear policy and practice regarding the use of Palauan as a parallel language in the school curriculum. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake a review of the aims of education outlined in the Master Plan for Education 2000, with a view to ensuring full conformity with article 29.1 and other relevant articles of the Convention. It is further recommended that the State party seek to strengthen its educational system through closer cooperation with UNICEF and UNESCO.**

## 7. Special protection measures

### Economic exploitation

54. The Committee expresses concern at the absence of adequate labour laws to protect children from economic exploitation. In the light of the increasing number of school drop-outs, the lack of a minimum age for employment and the increasing number of children living and/or working on the streets, the Committee is concerned about the lack of information and adequate data on the situation of child labour and economic exploitation in the State party.

**55. In the light of article 32 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party enact legislation to protect children from economic exploitation and introduce appropriate monitoring mechanisms to ensure the enforcement of such laws, including in**

**the informal sector. It is further recommended that the State party undertake a comprehensive study to assess the situation with regard to child labour. The Committee encourages the State party to consider ratifying ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.**

**Drug abuse**

56. The Committee is concerned at the high incidence of drug, alcohol and substance abuse (including the use of betelnut) among young people and the limited psychological, social and medical programmes and services available in this regard.

**57. In the light of article 33 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures, including administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of alcohol, narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances. It encourages the State party to strengthen its efforts to implement rehabilitation programmes dealing with child victims of alcohol, drug and substance abuse. In this regard, the Committee encourages the State party to consider seeking technical assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF, WHO and the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board.**

**Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 34)**

58. The Committee expresses its concern about the inadequate legal protection of children, particularly boys, against commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution and pornography. Concern is also expressed at the insufficient programmes for the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of such abuse and exploitation.

**59. In the light of article 34 and other related articles of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure adequate legal protection of children, including boys, against commercial sexual exploitation and pornography. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake all appropriate measures to ensure the non-stigmatization and non-criminalization of child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. Additionally, it is recommended that the State party undertake studies with a view to understanding the scope of the problem and implementing appropriate policies and measures, including the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims. The Committee recommends that the State party take into account the recommendations formulated in the Agenda for Action adopted at the 1996 Stockholm World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and that it raise the age for protection against commercial sexual exploitation to 18 years.**

**Administration of juvenile justice**

60. While the Committee notes the efforts of the State party in the area of juvenile justice, including the recent development, by the judiciary, of a programme that allows for alternative hearings for juveniles by the Minister of Justice, it is concerned that additional efforts are needed in this regard.

**61. The Committee recommends that the State party take all effective measures to implement a juvenile justice system in conformity with the Convention, in particular articles 37, 40 and 39, and of other United Nations standards in this field, such as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty. The Committee also recommends that the State party establish social services to support judges and guarantee the rights of children (especially the right to a fair hearing) in traditional disciplinary measures. The Committee further recommends that the State party consider seeking technical assistance from, inter alia, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Centre for International Crime Prevention, the International Network on Juvenile Justice and UNICEF, through the Coordination Panel on Technical Assistance and Advice in Juvenile Justice.**

### 1. Ratification of the Optional Protocols

62. While noting that the State party does not have an army or military service, **the Committee recommends that the State party consider signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Committee also recommends that the State party consider signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.**

### 2. Dissemination of reports

63. Finally, **the Committee recommends that, in the light of article 44, paragraph 6, of the Convention, the initial report and written replies presented by the State party be made widely available to the public at large and that publication of the report be considered, along with the relevant summary records and the concluding observations adopted thereon by the Committee. Such a document should be widely distributed in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention and its implementation and monitoring within the Government and the general public, including NGOs.**

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